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STATEMENT OF
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FOR CONSERVATION, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Before Subcommittee on Public Lands of the
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
United States House of Representatives

On Administration's Recommendations
Resulting from the Roadless Area Review
and Evaluation (RARE II)

June 25, 1979

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to review with you the Administration's recommendations resulting from the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II).

As you are aware, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on RARE II on January 4 of this year. Throughout the RARE II evaluation process, we sought and received substantial input from the general public, elected officials, and Federal agencies.

Even after the Secretary released the Department's Final EIS, he asked affected Governors, Members of Congress, and Federal agencies "one more time" for reactions to these final USDA recommendations, so that during the interagency review the Administration could consider these reactions and make responsive adjustments to the recommendations in the final EIS. He asked that all comments be provided by March 15. The reactions to the final EIS contained expressions of substantial

support, as well as recommendations for changes in the allocations of lands as wilderness, "further planning," or nonwilderness. We have provided, for the Committee's file, a complete set of the post-January 4 comments that were received.

In the month following March 15, this Department participated with the Office of Management and Budget and other Federal agencies in a series of discussions to consider the comments received and to develop the Administration's decision on nonwilderness and further planning areas and its recommendations to Congress with respect to which areas should be designated wilderness.

On April 16, the White House released the President's statement setting forth his recommendation that Congress designate 15.4 million acres as wilderness and his decision that 10.6 million acres shall undergo further planning and that 36 million acres shall be managed for "multiple uses" other than wilderness. Here is the full text of this statement for your record. On May 2, the President's statement and additional background information were transmitted to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate with a recommendation that Congress designate the proposed wildernesses. At the same time, the President directed that the Forest Service proceed under existing laws to plan and manage the nonwilderness areas.

In my February 14 testimony before this Committee, I described the effects of the RARE II recommendations contained in the Final EIS. The aggregate effects of the final Administration RARE II

decision are similar to those projected in the FEIS. The quality and diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System will be enhanced by the inclusion of the areas we recommended. At the same time, adoption by Congress of the President's wilderness recommendations will not preclude us from substantially meeting the 1975 RPA program targets for other resources.

Included with the President's statement is a list of the specific differences between the Administration's recommendations and those made in the Department's RARE II Final EIS. As you review this list, you will see that changes were made in each category--wilderness, further planning, and nonwilderness.

Changes were made where the additional information and recommendations provided by Members of Congress, Governors, or Federal agencies indicated that a change would improve the balance between wilderness and other resource values and uses. In a number of cases we were able to split an area to include additional lands in our wilderness recommendation, while leaving in further planning or nonwilderness a portion of the area based on high values for other uses. The Kangaroo area in Oregon-California is an example; a portion of the area was recommended as wilderness and another part, based on potential chromite deposits and high timber values, was placed in nonwilderness. In other cases we received substantial comment to the effect that an area needed further study to provide an opportunity to resolve competition between resource uses. If we determined that additional

essential information was needed, we tried to accommodate the request. If, on the other hand, most of the important information was available, we sought to try to make a firm recommendation for wilderness or nonwilderness.

In a few cases, we found a clear preference to switch or "swap" areas. Such was the case in South Dakota where we were seeking to provide a representation of the Black Hills Pine Forest ecosystem in the Wilderness System. The recommendation in the EIS was that Beaver Park be designated as wilderness. We found in the comments received in the final review a preference for the Norbeck area and consequently switched Beaver Park to nonwilderness and Norbeck to wilderness. These are but a few examples of an intensive interagency review whereby all agencies, coordinating through the Office of Management and Budget, sought to develop the best recommendation from the standpoint of the President's program.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize President Carter's view that these are well-balanced recommendations. "Action resulting from RARE II," said the President, "will meet two major Administration goals. First, the recommendations fulfill the pledge in my May 23, 1977, Environmental Message to enlarge the Nation's treasury of wilderness resources. And second, by releasing some of the land for uses other than wilderness, we respond to our urgent need for energy, wood products, livestock forage, minerals and a broad array of recreational opportunities.

In sum, our recommendations are vital to the effort to reduce inflation, control unemployment and encourage energy development."

This concludes my statement. I would be happy to respond to your questions.

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